Pam. Home missions.

A Larger Parish in North Carolina

By

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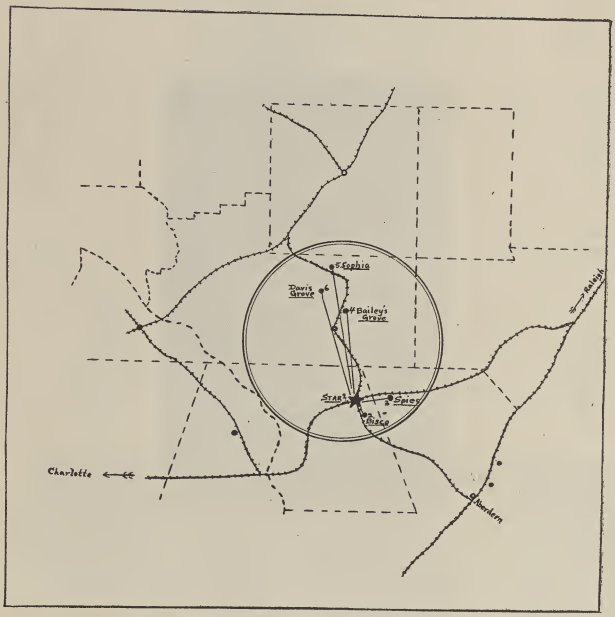


Diagram of Star Parish and Outlying Preaching Points

The Congregational Home Missionary Society
287 Fourth Avenue, New York City

A Larger Parish in North Carolina

I AM writing from the little village of Star, North Carolina. It is a place of some four hundred inhabitants, situated in Montgomery County, and at a point only a little south of the exact center of the state. Two lines of the Norfolk and Southern Railroad cross here. This section of country is known as the Piedmont (foot-hill) district and is largely undeveloped. There is no government survey. The great problem of the South is that of illiteracy. North Carolina has the largest number of native born white illiterates of any state in the Union excepting New Mexico and Florida. It constitutes an army numbering 132,189 persons, of which 47,710 are of voting age. This means that one hundred and forty out of every thousand voters, or one-seventh of all the voters in North Carolina, cannot read their ballots. Twelve per cent of the native whites in the Piedmont district, in which Star is located, cannot read or write.

MR. AND MRS. GREEN AND HUBERT

Here is both need and opportunity for academy, moonlight schools and extension work. The right kind of boys and girls have to be gone after and induced to come to school. They have to be held there. Comparatively few pupils go entirely through or beyond the grades. The present high wages are playing havoc with school attendance, and especially its continuance. There is a discouraging lack of pride in matters of education. The following remark made by a girl, almost a woman, is typical: "Oh, I can read and write; I guess I done got enough eddication."

One has only to visit round some to be impressed with the pathetic poverty and meagerness of life in some of the near-by sections of the country. There appears woefully little to make life much more than perhaps a tolerable existence. Young people have not the things that go to make youth bright and joyous. Abject hopelessness characterizes the faces and bearing of older people. So religion becomes what it is — something concerned with dying, death, heaven and the future life, and not a program for the here and now. Sunday services funerals and "protracted meetings" furnish the only diversion. What wonder that they are characterized largely by feeling, emotion and excitement rather than restful worship. One comes to understand why religion has often little to do with ordinary conduct and good ethics.

For a decade there have been several small Congregational churches in a group near Star. At

Star there has been developed a school known as the Carolina Collegiate and Industrial Institute, which up to this time has been independent, although its institution was inspired by Congregational field workers. In view of the needs and opportunities centering in this institution and the surrounding churches, the Congregational Home Missionary Society has decided to cooperate with the people in the effort to make this an outstanding rural parish in which shall be afforded a large range of spiritual and social ministry which is calculated to meet the needs of this entire region.

CHURCH IN THE WILDERNESS

The trustees of the Institute enter most earnestly and heartily into this plan, and as a guarantee for the future have transferred the title to the entire property, consisting of twenty-one acres and valuable equipment, to The Congregational Home Missionary Society as trustee. Of course the school must be financed independently, but it is to be done in intimate co-operation with the home missionary plan. It is indeed a vital and integral part of the larger parish scheme.

The Institute is a monument to nine years of sacrificial labor on the part of Rev. Edward F. Green and family. In recognition of this fact, and as a memorial to a son, Hubert, who was last Principal of the school and who died a soldier in France, the main building is to bear the name Hubert Green Memorial. The school has been largely a village grade and High School. As such it has won an enviable reputa-

THE DONOR OF THE TRACT OF LAND

tion. By superior work it has prompted other nearby schools to raise their standards. It is now entering upon a real missionary career. A boys' dormitory has been completed, which makes it possible

TYPICAL CABIN HOME

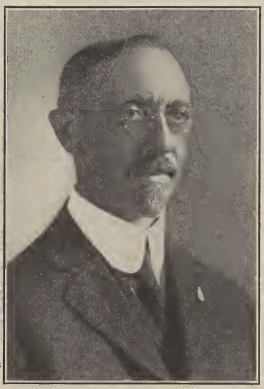
to go out into the woods and backward districts and bring in those who most need what the school can give. The need is for some generous donor who will provide another dormitory, so that a similar work can be done for girls.

The name Country Life Academy indicates one kind of work which will be done. Eighty per cent of the inhabitants of North Carolina live in the country. Needs and opportunities around Star are distinctly rural. The farmers are industrious but very poor. Their poverty is largely due to the fact that they do not know how to get what they might out of their small farms. Their boys must be taught scientific farming if they are to do any better. Many of these lads will not stay on the farms. They must be educated in trades and industries. And there is a corresponding and equally important need among the girls. They must somehow be made into good homemakers. Ignorance regarding the simplest laws of health, squalid and unkempt homes, account for the high death rate among infants and children. They explain the prevalence of typhoid and tuberculosis. Unsanitary conditions and lack of cleanliness produce hookworm, while a limited and one-sided diet results in pellagra and flux—diseases peculiar to the South. Men and women (also children) drink "moonshine" for a diversion. They do so to quiet the ever present gnawings of dyspepsia. All these conditions favor immorality.

The training of boys and girls for rural health, usefulness and prosperity will be stressed through coming years. This is in line with the educational emphasis in North Carolina. It meets the greatest need and opportunity. Courses offered by such institutions as the Farm Life schools, operating under the Smith-Hughes Law, and the one outlined by the State Department of Agriculture, will be duplicated at Star. A combination is likely to be effected, by which financial and other co-operation will be secured from the state. In that event the industrial and agricultural training will be put into the hands of a graduate of some accredited college of agriculture and a man who has had practical farm experience.

"HUBERT GREEN MEMORIAL"

The second part in the larger program at Star is the maintaining of a thoroughly Christian academy.



REV. LUDWIG THOMSEN

This will offer the very highest order of grade and High School work. It will parallel and supplement the industrial and agricultural education.

The work of the academy is in full operation. It is in charge of Rev. Ludwig Thomsen, formerly Superintendent of The Congregational Home Missionary Society in Idaho, and later Principal of Proctor Academy at Provo, Utah. Mr. Thomsen has the assistance of his talented wife. The work is to be thoroughly Christian. The academy is only a part in the larger parish enterprise. Mr. Thomsen will be minister to this parish as well as Principal of the academy. There are four Congregational fields, with church buildings, near Star.

The third effort at Star will be original and unique. It will be of religio-social character. The man has been carefully selected for the task. The writer made a never-to-be-forgotten trip back into the Kentucky mountains, and along "Troublesome," of which Miss Lucy Furnam writes so charmingly in "Mothering on Perilous" and found him. Rev. Parker W. Fisher is a graduate of Hartford Seminary. For nine years he has been carrying on an independent work for mountain folk at Leburn, Kentucky. During that time he secured funds necessary to build a church and parsonage while maintaining himself and family. Mrs. Fisher was greatly beloved in the mountains for the work she did in visiting the homes and nursing sick folk. She plays and sings and will be of great assistance to her husband. Mr. Fisher is fitted to incarnate, preach and teach a religion which will be in contrast to another prevailing type. The method in this new work will again be one of going out after people. The Home Missionary Society has fitted out a Ford cameonette, with a baby organ, up-to-date song books, moving picture machine and electric gener-

REV. PARKER W. FISHER

ator. This equipment will be used in a special type of effort. It will be extension work—using it in schools,

churches, or if necessary, wheeling right out into some beautiful oak grove.

Mr. Fisher is going to deal with the whole man and the entire life process, while practicing a religion of fellowship and helpfulness. He will be concerned with recreation, health, work and worship. Nor will he work alone. Doctors, the visiting nurse, home and farm demonstrators will be called into a co-operative teamplay. Everything that has to do with the religion of every day living will be focused upon points and places of real need. The parish car is to stand for a religion of good cheer like unto that of Him who also sought out the poor and neglected that they might have life and have it more abundantly.

Mr. Fisher will maintain vital connection with the academy. He is a carpenter, mechanic and all-around man, and will be needed in practical ways during the building period. He will put in courses in manual training and carpentry at Star. And all the while as he goes about the country he will be doing a most important piece of work—that of finding and bringing in boys and girls who want, or can be made to want, a thorough Christian education.

If my tone seems over-optimistic and confident, I make no apology. It is due partly to the fact that I have spent weeks in a careful study of the people and region round about. And one cannot be at Star these days, listen to the noise of hammer and saw, watch the new buildings rise, feast on the wonderful view from the school-grounds, and breathe in the healthy, invigorating air, without enthusing over this venture.

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